



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fifty Years Later

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas' statement on the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington:

Fifty years ago today, Americans from around the nation made the journey by bus, train and airplane to join Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the nation's capital, marching to demand that the United States of America live up to the ideals of equality for all expressed in its founding documents.

In a speech that electrified the nation, Dr. King, reminded the nation that 100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln, freedom was still elusive—for millions of citizens. African Americans faced police brutality and unequal access to employment. Discriminatory voting laws relegated African-Americans and other minorities to second class citizenship status.

We have made great strides in making Dr. King's dream a reality of judging a man by his character and not by his skin color. Change indeed has come to America. Twice, the nation affirmed the new reality of possibilities by electing Barack Obama to the presidency.

Yet as we reflect on the progress we have made as a nation on this momentous anniversary, there is undeniably still much more work to be done.

Every day, African-American young men are disproportionately victims of gun violence and in many cases racial profiling. The unjust shooting of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin and the legal exoneration of his killer is but one example. Women, for example, still are not paid on par with men and we still struggle with extending the protections of civil rights to all citizens.

Our work is not done. This past June, the Supreme Court of the United States rolled back the clock in a majority decision that sabotaged the Voting Rights Act, eliminating a mechanism that safeguarded the enfranchisement of millions of African Americans.

So today, as we honor the legacy of Dr. King, let us recommit ourselves not just to his dream for America, but to his principles of nonviolence and to his example, standing against injustice individually and collectively, rolling up our sleeves and going to work.

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